Whitepaper

20 EARLY SIGNS YOUR CONTAINERISATION PROJECT IS IN DISTRESS

If you are implementing technology to run containers, you are in the middle of a containerisation project.

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FOREWORD

Containerisation has become the catch-all term for modernisation. Whether your organisation calls it Kubernetes adoption, replatforming, or digital transformation, the reality is the same: if you are implementing technology to run containers, you are in the middle of a containerisation project.

These projects are high-stakes. They promise speed, efficiency, and portability, but the reality is often slower, more expensive, and more complex than anyone admits. Most failures don't happen in a single dramatic moment. They creep in silently. Deadlines slip a little, stakeholders disengage, engineers bury problems in technical jargon, and budgets start to drip away quarter by quarter.

By the time leadership realises a project has gone off the rails, it's usually too late to course-correct. That's why this paper is focused on leading indicators; the early signs that your project is already in distress, even if the official dashboards still show green.

This is a wake-up call. Read the twenty signs. Ask yourself, honestly, how many you can already see. If it's one or two, you may still have time. If it's more than that, you don't have a healthy project, you have a failing one. The first step to recovery is admitting the problem. The second is deciding you won't allow it to drift any further.

USE THIS AS A "SH*T-CHECK" FOR YOUR OWN PROJECT.

Sit down with the list, and ask yourself: How many of these can I honestly see in my environment right now?

- If it's just one or two, you have early warning signs and time to intervene.

- If it's four or five, you are in dangerous territory and need corrective action immediately.

- If it's more than that, your project isn't at risk of failure, it's already failing, whether or not anyone has admitted it.

THE 20 EARLY SIGNS

1 Six months in and the go-live date has already slipped. Everyone knows it'll slip again.

2 You're told old and new platforms must run in parallel "for a year." That's code for: we're way behind.

3 Steering meetings have degraded into talk fests, not decision-making.

4 Engineers are "too busy" to document. If they walked out tomorrow, the platform walks with them.

5 Every new plan quietly rewrites the milestones you thought you agreed.

6 Security and compliance are still being "looped in," long after the build began.

7 The toolchain keeps growing. Every new ask is "essential" and every one eats more budget.

8 Core apps have been swapped for "low-risk pilots." Translation: the real work is on ice.

9 Demos have become screenshots. If you can't click it, it doesn't exist.

10 Knowledge sits with two or three heroes. If they take leave, progress stops.

11 Developers complain the new platform makes them slower. You're still being told it's fine.

12 Test environments are always broken. Nobody outside the team can validate progress.

13 You're asked to approve a production pilot missing critical features. "We'll add them later."

14 Daily scrums are full of "no updates," while formal reports brag about effort spent instead of forward progress.

15 Missed milestones are quietly redefined so the dashboard stays green.

16 Endless debates on service mesh or observability, yet nothing useful runs in production.

17 Budgets are presented quarter-by-quarter because the full number is too ugly to show.

18 Business stakeholders have stopped showing up. They don't see it touching them anytime soon.

19 Risks keep getting parked under "later." Later never comes.

20 The project has been rebranded as "transformation." That's just lowering the bar without admitting failure.

TAKE ACTION

The uncomfortable truth is this: once these signs appear, they rarely go away on their own. They compound. A project with one or two warning signs left unchecked will soon show five or six. By then, momentum is gone, the team is defensive, and the business is left wondering what it has really bought.

This checklist is not designed to scare you. It's designed to wake you up. If you recognised yourself in more than a few of these points, your project is already in distress. That doesn't mean it's doomed, but it does mean you can't afford to ignore reality any longer.

The first step is acceptance.
The second is action.

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